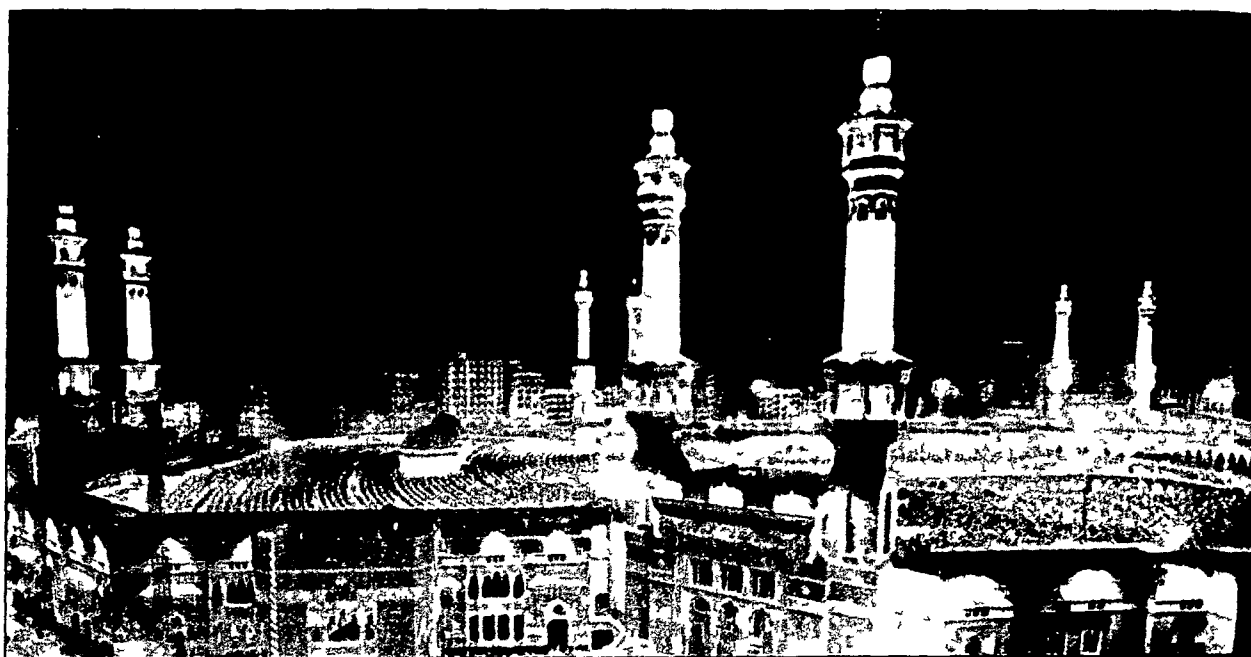


Focus on Ramadhan



Fasting is an act which will take the Believer to the Paradise.

then speech and deeds) the men and women who are patient the men and women who are humble (before their Lord) the men and women who give charity the men and women who fast the men and women who guard their chastity (from illegal sexual acts) and the men and women who remember Allah much Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward (i.e. Paradise) (al-Ahzab 33:35)

And from the Sunnah

In the famous hadith of Muhammad I said O Messenger of Allah tell me of an act which will take me into Paradise and keep me away from Hell Fire. He said You have asked me about a major matter yet it is easy for him for whom Allah Almighty makes it easy. You should fast in Ramadhan. Then he said Shall I not show you the gates of goodness? Fasting is a shield (at Tirmidhi)

Abu Umamah reported I came to the Messenger of Allah and said Order me to do a deed that will allow me to enter Paradise. He said Stick to fasting as there is no equivalent to it. Then I came to him

again and he said Stick to fasting (Ibn Hibban an-Nasa'i and al-Hakim Sahih)

Sahl ibn Sa'ad reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said There is a gate to Paradise that is called *al-Raihan*. On the Day of Resurrection it will say Where are those who fasted? When the last (one) has passed through the gate it will be locked (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Huraira said I heard Allah's Apostle saying Anybody who spends a pair of something in Allah's Cause will be called from all the gates of Paradise O Allah's slave! This is good. He who is amongst those who pray will be called from the gate of the prayer (in Paradise) and he who is from the people of Jihad will be called from the gate of Jihad and he who is from those who give in charity (i.e. Zakat) will be called from the gate of charity and he who is amongst those who observe fast will be called from the gate of fasting the gate of *Raihan*. Abu Bakr said He who is called from all those gates will need nothing. He added Will any one be called from all those gates O Allah's Apostle? He said Yes and I hope you will be among those O Abu Bakr (Bukhari)

Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhane'i said A man came to the Prophet (peace be on him) and said O Messenger of Allah what if I testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah and I observe the five daily prayers and I pay the Zakaah and I fast and stand in prayer (at night i.e. *Qiyam*) in Ramadhan then amongst who shall I be? He said Amongst the true followers of the prophets and the martyrs (Ibn Hibban in az-Zawaid Its Isnad is Sahih)

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said When the month of Ramadhan starts the gates of the heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained (Bukhari)

Manners of Fasting

Like any other worship fasting also has its manners and etiquette. I shall restrict myself to the most important ones herein.

1 Taking the Suhoor (the pre-dawn meal)

Anas reported that the Messenger of Allah said Eat Suhoor

Focus on Ramadhan

for there are blessings in it (al Bukhari and Muslim)

a) **What would fulfill the sunnah of eating suhoor** The sunnah would be fulfilled by eating a small or large quantity of food or even just by drinking a sip of water

Abu Saïd al-Khudri reported that the Messenger of Allah said: The *Suhoor* is blessed so do not neglect it even if you only take a sip of water. Verily Allah and the angels pray for those who have predawn meals (Ahmad)

b) **The time for Suhoor** The time for *Suhoor* is between the middle of the night and dawn. It is considered best to delay it (that is, is close to dawn is possible)

Zaid ibn Thabit reported: We ate *Suhoor* with the Messenger of Allah and then we got up for the prayer. He was asked: What was the amount of time between the two? He responded: (The time it would take to recite) 5 verses (al Bukhari and Muslim)

Amr ibn Maimun adds: The companions of Muhammad would be the first to break the fast and the last to eat their *Suhoor* (al Buhārī)

2 **Hastening in breaking the fast** It is preferred for the fasting person to hasten in breaking the fast when the sun has set. Sahl ibn Saïd reported that the Prophet said: The people will always be with the good as long as they hasten in breaking the fast (al Bukhari and Muslim)

The fast should be broken with dates or if that is not available with some water. Anis reported:

The Messenger of Allah would break his fast with ripe dates before he would pray. If those were not available he would eat dried dates. If those were not available

he would drink some water (Abu Dawud al Hakim at-Tirmidhi)

Sulaiman ibn Amr reported that the Prophet said: If one of you is fasting he should break his fast with dates. If dates are not available then with water for water is purifying (Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi)

The preceding hadith also shows that it is preferred to break the fast in the above manner before praying. After the prayer the person may continue to eat but if the evening meal is ready one may begin with that. Anas reported that the Messenger of Allah said: If the food is already presented eat before the sunset prayer and do not eat your meals in haste (al Bukhari and Muslim)

3 Supplications while breaking the fast and while fasting

It is confirmed that the Prophet would say: *The thirst has gone, the glands are wet and Allah will give the reward* is confirmed

The Prophet said: Three people will not have their supplications rejected: a fasting person until he breaks his fast, a just ruler and an oppressed person (at-Tirmidhi)

4 **Refraining from actions that do not befit the fasting** Fasting is a type of worship that draws one closer to Allah. Allah has prescribed it to purify the soul and to train it in good deeds. The fasting person must be on guard against any act that may cause him to lose the benefits of his fast. Thus his fast will increase his *Taqwa* and Allah says in the Qur'an:

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so perchance you may attain Taq

wa

Fasting is not just refraining from eating and drinking but it is also refraining from everything else that Allah has forbidden

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet said: Fasting is not (abstaining) from eating and drinking only but also from vain speech and foul language. If one of you is being cursed or annoyed he should say: I am fasting, I am fasting. (Ibn Khuzaimah, Ibn Hibban and al Hakim)

Abu Hurairah also reported that the Prophet upon whom be peace said: Allah does not need the fast of one who does not abandon false speech or acting according to his false speech

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet said: Perhaps a fasting person will get nothing from his fast save hunger and perhaps the one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his standing except sleeplessness (an-Nasai, Ibn Majah and al Hakim)

Using the Siwak (tooth stick brush) It is preferred for the fasting person to use a tooth stick or a brush. There is no difference if he uses it at the beginning or the end of the day. At-Tirmidhi affirms that Ash-Shafi'i did not see anything wrong with using a tooth brush during the beginning or the ending of the day. The Prophet would use his tooth (*Siwak*) while fasting

Being generous and studying the Qur'an Being generous and studying the Qur'an is recommended during any time but it is especially stressed during the month of Ramadhan. Al-Bukhari recorded that Ibn Abbas said: The Prophet was the most generous of people but he would be his most generous during Ramadhan when he would meet with (the angel) Jibreel (Gabriel). He would meet with him every night and recite the Qur'an. When Jibreel met him he used to be more generous

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than a fast wind

Abu Huraira reported that Jibreel used to repeat the recitation of the Qur'an with the Prophet once a year but he repeated it twice with him in the year he died

Praying in the nights of Ramadhan Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet, (peace be on him) said "Whoever offers prayers during the nights of Ramadhan faithfully out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not for showing off) all his past sins will be forgiven (Bukhari)

Abu Salma bin Abdur Rahman said I asked 'Aisha 'How is the prayer of Allah's Apostle during the month of Ramadhan?' She said 'Allah's Apostle never exceeded 11 Rakat in Ramadhan or in other months he used to offer four Rakat do not ask me about their beauty and length then four Rakat do not ask me about their beauty and length and then three Rakat' Aisha further said 'I said 'O Allah's Apostle! Do you sleep before offering the Witr prayer?' He replied 'O Aisha! My eyes sleep but my heart remains awake!'

Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhane said 'A man came to the Prophet (peace be on him), and said 'O Messenger of Allah what if I testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah and I observe the five daily prayers and I pay the Zakah and I fast and stand in prayer (at night i.e. Qiyam) in Ramadhan, then amongst whom shall I be?' He said 'Amongst the true followers of the prophets and the martyrs' (Ibn Hibban in az-Zawa'id Its Isnad is Sahih)

This is better if done in Jama'a

(congregation) for the Prophet (peace be on him) said 'When a man prays with the imam until he (the imam) concludes (the prayer), it is recorded that he stood (in prayers) the whole night (Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi and Nasa'i and it is Sahih)

Last 10 Days of Ramadhan

Before going to the essentials of this last section let us stop by one of the great Imams one of the greatest revivers of the Da'wah and the methodology of the Salaf Shaikhul-Islam Shamsuddeen Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah who will give us a brain storming admonition

He says in *Zaad al Ma'ad*

Since the heart's rectitude and firmness upon the path towards Allah the Most High rests upon directing it solely to Allah and causing it to turn and give all its attention to Allah the Most High. Since the disorder of the heart cannot be rectified except by turning to Allah the Most High and its disorder will increase by eating and drinking too much mixing with the people excessively speaking profusely and sleeping too much. These will cause it to wander into every valley and cut it off from its path to Allah weaken it divert it or put a halt to it.

An act of the Mercy of the Mighty and Most Merciful is that He has prescribed for them fasting which will cut off the excesses of eating and drinking and empty the heart of its desires which divert it from its journey to Allah the Most High. He prescribed it in due proportion as will be appropriate and will benefit the servant with regard to this world and the Hereafter and does not harm him nor damage what is beneficial for him.

He also prescribed *itkaf* for them by which is intended that the heart is fully occupied with Allah the Most High concentrated upon Him alone and cut off from preoccupation with the creation. Rather it is engrossed with Him alone, the One free of all defects such that remembering Him loving Him and turning to Him takes the place of all anxieties of the heart and its promptings such that he is able to overcome them. Thus all his concerns are for Him. His thoughts are all of remembrance of Him and thinking of how to attain His Pleasure and what will cause nearness to Him. This leads him to feel contented with Allah instead of the people so that it prepares him for being at peace with Him alone on the day of loneliness in the grave, when there is no one else to give comfort nor anyone to grant solace except Him. So this is the greater goal of *itkaf*.

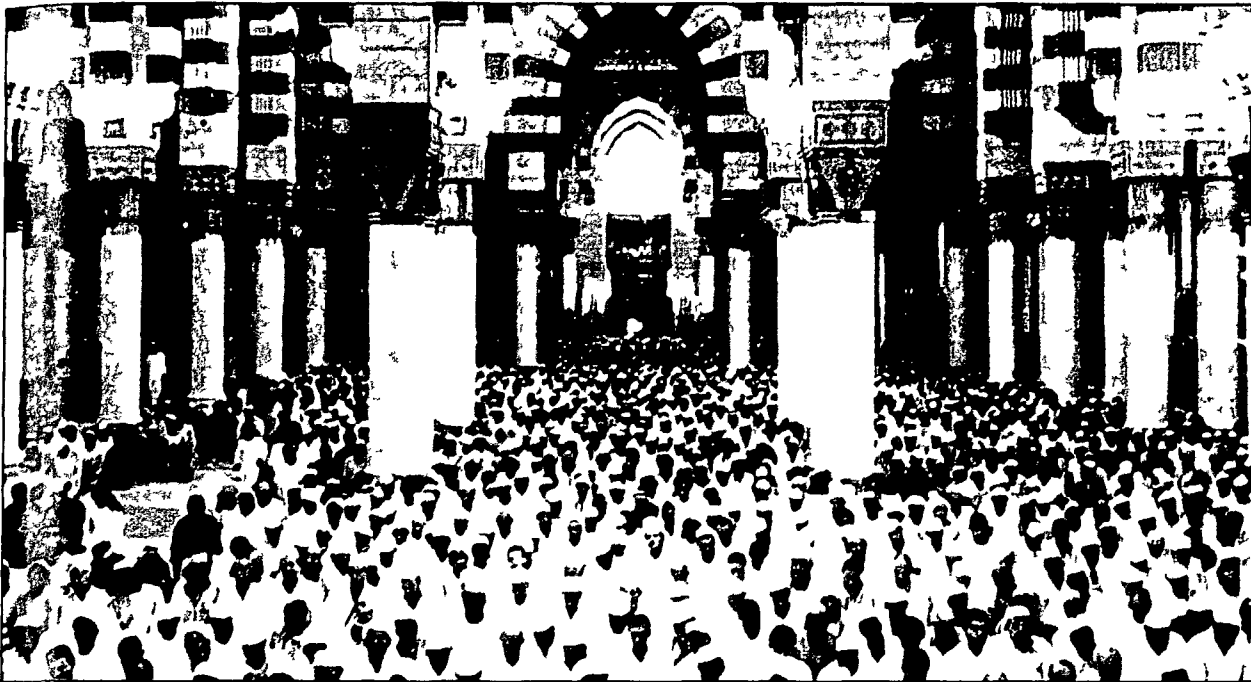
How to benefit from the last part of Ramadhan?

Though all parts of Ramadhan are full of blessings and rewards, its last ten days hold a special status reflected in the recommendations and practices of the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) and his companions. I will focus here on three major practices of the Prophet, (peace be on him) and his companions during these days.

1. Praying in the last ten nights of Ramadhan

Al-Bukhari and Muslim record from Aishah that during the last 10 days of Ramadhan the Messenger of Allah would wake his wives up during the night and then keep away from them (that is being busy in acts of worship). A version in *Muslim* states 'He

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Worshippers inside the Noble Prophet's Mosque during Ramadhan.

would strive (to do acts of worship) during the last 10 days of Ramadhan more than he would at any other time

Aisha reported that with the start of the last 10 days of Ramadhan the Prophet used to gird up his loins and used to pray all the night and used to keep his family awake for the prayers (Bukhari)

Performing *I tikaf* in the Masjid (seclusion in the Mosque) *I tikaf* is the seclusion and staying in the mosque with the intention of becoming closer to Allah

Aisha reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) used to practise *I tikaf* in the last 10 nights of Ramadhan and used to say: Look for the Night of Qadr in the last 10 nights of the month of Ramadhan (Bukhari)

Abu Hurairah said: Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) used to perform *i tikaf* for 10 days every Ramadhan then when it was the year in which he was taken up by Allah Himself (died) he performed

i tikaf for 20 days (Bukhari)

Aisha reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to practise *I tikaf* in the last 10 days of Ramadhan till he died and then his wives used to practice *I tikaf* after him (Bukhari)

Aishah reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) Used to perform *i tikaf* in the last 10 days of Ramadhan until Allah the Mighty and Majestic took him up to Him (Bukhari and Muslim)

This Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him) has been abandoned by many Muslims and it is worth reviving it in this era Sayyid Sabiq says in Fiqhus Sunnah

The sunnah or preferred *i tikaf* has no specific time limit. It can be fulfilled by staying in the mosque with the intention of making *i tikaf* for a long or short time. The reward will be according to how long one stays in the mosque. If one leaves the mosque and then returns he should renew his intention to perform *i tikaf*.

Yahya ibn Umar said: I secluded myself in the mosque for some time for *i tikaf*. Ata told

him: That is *i tikaf* as long as you secluded yourself there

One who is performing Sunnah (like in Ramadhan) *i tikaf* (i.e. not the obligatory one that is made after a vow) may end his *i tikaf* at any time even if it is before the period he intended to stay

Aishah related that if the Prophet intended to make *i tikaf* he would pray the morning prayer and begin it. On one occasion he wanted to make *i tikaf* during the last 10 nights of Ramadhan and he ordered his tent to be set up. Aishah reported: When I saw that I ordered my tent to be set up and some of the Prophet's wives followed suit. When he (the Prophet) prayed the morning prayer he saw all of the tents and said: 'What is this?' They said:

'We are seeking obedience (to Allah and His Messenger)'. Then he ordered his tent and those of his wives to be taken down and delayed his *i tikaf* to the first 10 days (of Shawwal) (Bukhari)

The fact that the Messenger of

Focus on Ramadhan

Allah ordered (his and) his wives tents to be pulled down and (he himself left and) asked them to leave the *i tikaf* after they made the intention for it shows that they discarded the *i tikaf* after they had begun it. In this small paragraph are some additional comments to clarify things

I'tikaf is not restricted to men only, women also can do it Aisha (the wife of the Prophet) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to practice I'tikaf in the last 10 days of Ramadhan till he died and then his wives used to practice I'tikaf after him (Bukhari)

A woman can visit her husband who is in I'tikaf Safiyyah, said The Prophet (peace be on him), was observing *i tikaf* (in the last ten nights of Ramadhan) so I came to visit him at night (and his wives were with him and then departed) I talked with him for a while then I stood up to leave, then he said "Do not hurry for I will accompany you" He stood along with me to accompany me back and her dwelling was in the house of Usaamah Ibn Zayd (until when he came to the door of the mosque near the door of Umm Salamah) two men of the Ansar were passing by when they saw the Prophet, (peace be on him) they hastened by so the Prophet (peace be on him) said Be at your ease for she is Safiyyah bintu Huyayy So they said "Allah is free from imperfections! O Messenger of Allah!" He said Indeed Shaytan circulates in the veins of the son of Adam just as blood circulates and I feared that he would insert an evil thought – or he said something – into your hearts" (Bukhari and Muslim in brackets are additions from Abu Dawud)

Seeking Laylatul-Qadr (the

Night of Decree It is the greatest night of the year like the Day of 'Arafah is the greatest day of the year It is a night about which Allah revealed a full Surah, Suratul-Qadr (97 1-5) and the 3rd to the 6th verses of Surat ad-Dukhan (44 3-6)

It is the night when the Qur'an was revealed

It is the night when the Message (the Final and seal of all messages) sent to Muhammad (peace be on him), started to be sent down

It is the night when the light that would illuminate mankind to the end of life started It is the night when every matter is decreed

Allah says

Verily! We have sent it (this Qur'an) down in the Night of Decree (Lailatul Qadr) And what will make you know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months Therein descend the angels and the Rooh (ie Jibreel (Gabriel)) by Allaah's Permission with all Decrees Peace! until the appearance of dawn (97 1 5)

and in Surat ad-Dukhan

We sent it (this Qur'an) down on a blessed Night Verily We are ever warning (mankind of Our torment) Therein (that Night) is decreed every matter of ordainment Amian (ie a command or this Qur'an or His Decree of every matter) from Us Verily We are ever sending (the Messenger) (As) a Mercy from your Lord Verily! He is the All Healer the All Knower (44 3-6)

A person who misses Laylatul Qadr is really a deprived person!

Abu Hurairah reported that the

Prophet, (peace be on him) said The blessed month has come to you Allah has made fasting during it obligatory upon you During it the gates to Paradise are opened and the gates of Hellfire are locked, and the devils are chained There is a night (during this month) which is better than a thousand months Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived (of something great) (Ahmad, an-Nasa'i and al-Bayhaqi)

One who misses this blessed night then he has missed much good for no one misses it except one from whom it is withheld Therefore it is recommended that the Muslim who is eager to be obedient to Allah should stand in Prayer during this night out of Iman and hoping for the great reward, since if he does this, Allah will forgive his previous sins¹

What should the person who witnesses Laylatul-Qadr do? Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him), said Whoever stands (in prayer) in Laylatul Qadr out of Iman (faith and sincerity) and seeking reward then his previous sins are forgiven (Bukhari)

It is recommended to supplicate a lot during this night it is reported from our mother 'Aishah that she said O Messenger of Allah! What if I knew which night Laylatul Qadr was then what should I say in it? He said 'Say (Allahumma innaka affuwun tuhibbul afwa fa fu annee)

O Allaah you are the one who pardons greatly and loves to pardon so pardon me' (at-Tirmithi and Ibn Majah with a Sahih Isnad)

When is Laylatul-Qadr? It is preferred to seek this night during the last ten odd nights of Ramadhan, as the Prophet (peace be on him) strove his best in seeking

Focus on Ramadhan

it during that time. We have already mentioned that the Prophet would stay up during the last ten nights, would wake up his wives and then would remain aloof from them engrossed in worship.

Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said: Look for the Night of Qadr in the last ten nights of Ramadhan on the night when nine or seven or five nights remain out of the last ten nights of Ramadhan (i.e. 21, 23, 25 respectively) (Bukhari).

Aishah said: Allah's Messenger used to practise *itikaf* in the last ten nights and say: Seek out *Lailatul Qadr* in the (odd nights) of the last ten days of Ramadhan (Bukhari and Muslim).

However, if one is too weak or unable, then he should at least not let the last seven pass him by due to what is reported from Ibn 'Umar who said: Allah's Messenger said: Seek it in the last ten, and if one of you is too weak or unable, then let him not allow that to make him miss the final seven (Bukhari and Muslim).

This explains his saying: I see that your dreams are in agreement (that it is in the last seven) so he who wishes to seek it out, then let him seek it in the last seven (Bukhari and Muslim).

It is known from the Sunnah that knowledge of the exact night upon which *Lailatul Qadr* falls was taken away because the people argued. Ubaadah ibn al-Samit said: The Prophet came out intending to tell us about *Lailatul Qadr*, however two men were arguing and he said: I come out to inform you about *Lailatul Qadr*, but so and so and so and so were arguing, so it was raised up and perhaps that is better for you

so seek it on the (twenty) ninth and the (twenty) seventh and the (twenty) fifth (Bukhari).

Some Ahadith indicate that *Lailatul Qadr* is in the last ten nights, while others indicate that it is in the odd nights of the last ten, so the first are general and the second more particular, and the particular has to be given priority over the general. Other Ahadith state that it is in the last seven – and these are restricted by mention of one who is too weak or unable. So there is no confusion, all the Ahadith are agreed upon and are not contradictory.

In conclusion, The Muslim should seek out *Lailatul Qadr* in the odd nights of the last ten: the night of the twenty-first, the twenty-third, the twenty-fifth, the twenty-seventh and the twenty-ninth. If he is too weak or unable to seek it out in all the odd nights, then let him seek it out in the odd nights of the last seven: the night of the twenty-fifth, the twenty-seventh and the twenty-ninth. And Allah knows best.¹

Signs of *laylatul-Qadr*¹ Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) described the morning after *Lailatul Qadr* so that the Muslim may know which day it is. From Ubayy who said that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said: On the morning following *Lailatul Qadr*, the sun rises not having any rays, as if it were a brass dish until it rises up (Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah).

Abu Hurairah said: We were discussing *Lailatul-Qadr* in the presence of Allah's Messenger, so he said: Which of you remembers (the night) when the moon arose and was like half a plate? (Mus-

lim).

Ibn Abbaas said: Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said: *Lailatul Qadr* is calm and pleasant, neither hot nor cold, the sun rises on its morning being feeble and red (at-Tayaalisee, Ibn Khuzaimah and al-Bazzaar with a Hasan Isnad).

Conclusion

Successful indeed are those who during this Ramadhan will fast during the day and pray at night. Those who did not will regret it and regret it deeply.

Ramadhan comes only once in a year, therefore we should host it in the best possible way. However, unlike many people who think and behave responsibly its (Ramadhan) treatment is not the tables full of dishes and the useless parties and gatherings, but rather the reading of Qur'an, the remembrance of Allah, the prayer at night behind the Imam (the Taraweeh prayer), the *Suhoor*, the *du'a* at the Iftar, the charity.

My dear Muslim brother and sister, after reading all this, I hope that all of us are going to prepare ourselves to fast as perfectly as possible this coming month of Ramadhan by purifying our intention for Allah and following the footsteps of the Prophet (peace be on him) and his companions.

¹ Passages from the book *Fasting in Ramadhan as observed by the Prophet* (peace be on him) by Shaikh Ali al-Halabi and Shaikh Salim al-Hilali. This book is one of the best books written so far on the topic, especially that it contains all ayat and authentic ahadith relevant to fasting and to Ramadhan. Alhamdulillah, it has been translated to English (it is available from al-Hidaya in UK) and from al-Qur'an was Sunnah Society of North America.

Focus on Ramadhan

Ramadan:

Sighting of the Moon

Adil Salahi

EVERY year in Ramadan the problem of sighting the moon is raised. Some people suggest that Muslims should do away with the old method of sighting the moon with the naked eye, and rely instead on calculation. They argue that it is possible to determine the exact time down to the hour and minute, of the birth of the new moon long in advance. Why should we continue to rely on sighting with our eyes, which was an appropriate method for the days, when such accurate calculations were not available? All this may sound both logical and expedient. It will save people the many problems associated with making late announcements of the beginning of Ramadan and its end as happens very often.

Many readers have put this question to me in the past, especially with the problems which we have had recently in sighting the moon, and the error that took place a few years ago. This article does not address the problem in its entirety. Only an Islamic jurist's counsel could make a decision which has to be backed, ratified and implemented by governments. We are only attempting here to discuss some of the Hadiths, which relate to this problem, in order to shed some light on its different aspects. I hope that this discussion will go some way

The general principle which the Prophet has laid down is that fasting begins on the day which follows the sighting of the moon. We have a number of Hadiths, all authentic which state this principle in varying modes of expression.

toward making the readers especially those who have taken the trouble to write to me for clarification, more aware of the Islamic viewpoint in this connection.

It is worth noting at the outset that Islam is a religion revealed by Allah in order to be implemented by all societies, regardless of the degree of their material or scientific advancement. It was revealed 1400 years ago and it will continue to be the last guidance Allah gives to mankind for the rest of time. When it tackles certain aspect of human life, it has to limit itself to laying down a number of broad guidelines leaving the details to be filled in by every Islamic society according to the degree of progress it has achieved.

As long as any society remains within the framework of these guidelines, it remains Islamic. In other matters, particularly those, which affect the inner human personality which does not undergo any fundamental change, Islam lays down specific rules, which remain valid for all time. Every Muslim has to implement them. One such rule is fasting in Ramadan. Every human being needs the benefits, which fasting ensures. Hence every human being is commanded to fast in the month of Ramadan.

Islam adopts the lunar year because it is the easier to follow by all societies including very primitive ones. Every new moon signals the beginning of a month. Moreover, the lunar year has the advantage of varying the time of those acts of worship which occur annually, such as fasting, zakah and pilgrimage.

The Prophet was keen to give us guidance for the determination of the beginning of the month of Ramadan, which allows for all different situations. The general principle he has laid down is that fasting begins on the day, which follows the sighting of the moon. We have a number of Hadiths, all authentic which state this principle in varying modes of expression. A very clear statement by the Prophet is that related by Ab

Focus on Ramadhan



Time of breaking fast The time of special happiness for the fasting person

dullah ibn Umar that when Allah's Messenger mentioned Ramadan he said "Do not fast until you have sighted the new moon and do not end your fasting until you have sighted it. If your sighting is beclouded, use your discretion."

Here we have a specific instruction that we must not begin fasting or end it unless the moon is sighted. This is due to the fact that Islam does not like confusion to spread among the Muslim community in matters of worship.

They therefore must act on certain knowledge. If the moon is not sighted then we do not begin fasting unless we have used our discretion in the way outlined by the Prophet in other Hadiths.

This clear instruction closes the door to any thought of fasting a day extra in order to be on the safe side. Many a Muslim may have such thoughts, especially if a mistake should happen in sighting the moon one year. The next year you will find many people wondering, "Why do we not fast

the day before, in order to be absolutely sure that we have fasted Ramadan right at the beginning? An extra day of fasting is not too much trouble."

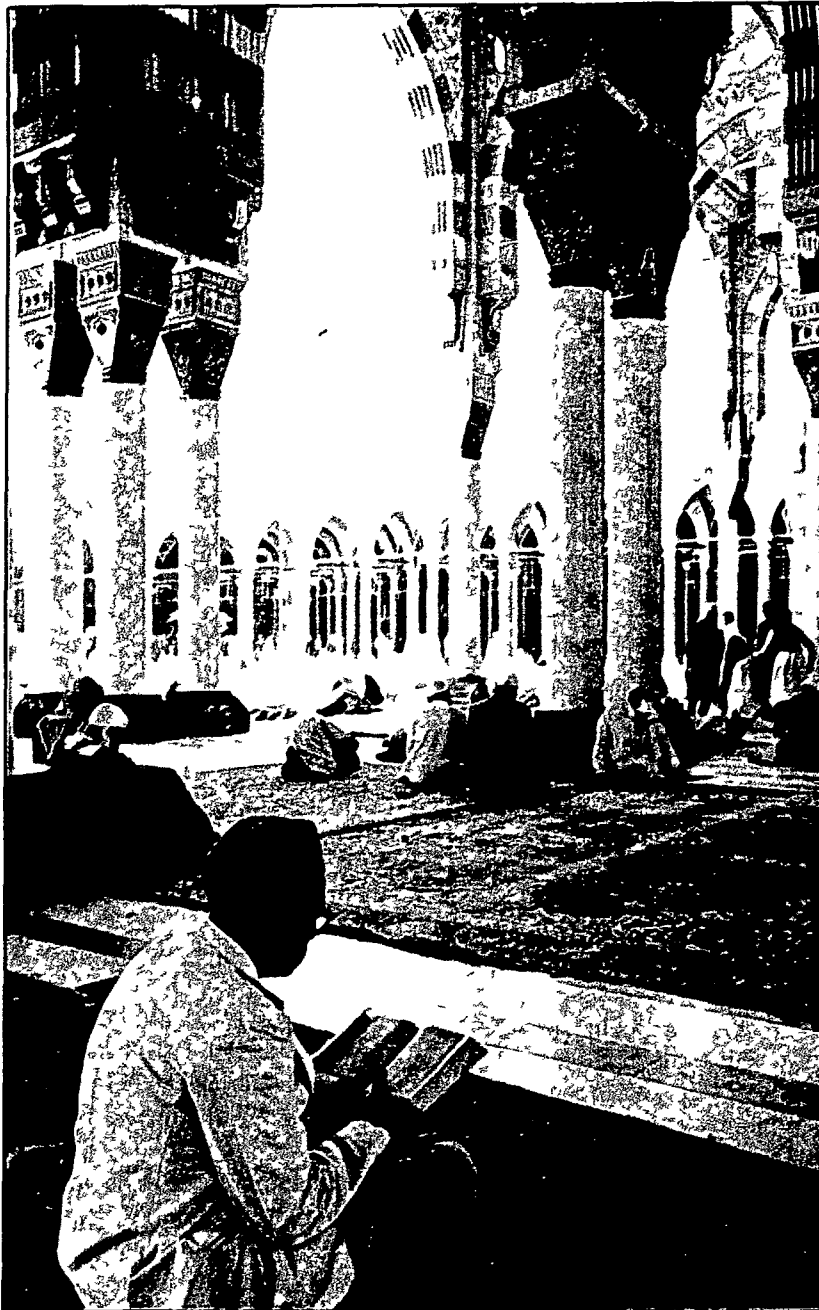
Yet this is exactly what Islam does not want its followers to do. The fact is that a lunar month could be of 29 or 30 days. Therefore on the evening of the 29th day of Shaban people are advised to go out to open spaces in order to try to sight the moon. The following day is termed the day of doubt because it could be the last day of Shaban or the first day of Ramadan. The thought of fasting on this day as a precaution may be attractive to many people. The Prophet says, however, "He who fasts the day of doubt has disobeyed Abul Qasim." Abul Qasim is a name of the Prophet himself. There can be no clearer prohibition of fasting on that day. The idea of keeping on the safe side does not arise at all in matters of Islamic worship.

For one thing it is an affront to Allah. For another it may lead to great confusion. It makes Ram-

adan at least of 30 days all the time and it could make it of 31 days, which is not possible in lunar months. If Ramadan happens to be of 30 days in one year and people fast the day of doubt then they have fasted 31 days. Allah likes us to do exactly what He orders us. He does not wish us to add to any particular duty He has imposed. This is different from voluntary worship which is done all the time. It is an effort to make a duty 'more complete'. The whole idea is inadmissible in Islamic thinking.

We see then that sighting of the moon is very important. But what about the alternative of using our discretion when clouds prevent its sighting? Other Hadiths give us a clue to what is meant here. The Prophet says, "The month has 29 nights. Do not fast until you have sighted it (i.e. the new moon). Should you be prevented by clouds from sighting it, complete the count (of the preceding month) to 30." In another Hadith the Prophet says, "Fast when you have sighted it and end

Focus on Ramadhan



With the sighting of the new moon, Muslims start the month long schedule of fasting, meditation and reading of the Qur'an.

your fast when you have sighted it. If it is beclouded then complete the count of Sha'aban to 30.

Completing the count of the preceding month Shaban to 30 days is then the way the Prophet has indicated for us when we have to use our discretion. It is the way which can be followed by all so-

cieties. It is also the way to be followed in determining the end of Ramadan. We finish fasting when we have sighted the new moon, which announces the beginning of the month of Shawwal. If clouds prevent us from sighting the moon, then we have to complete Ramadan to 30 days.

Commentators on the Hadiths of the Prophet tend to take the phrase "use your discretion in the first Hadiths I have quoted as synonymous with the other advice to complete the count on the preceding month to 30. It seems, however, possible to give it a different interpretation. Can we take it as a statement giving us the necessary sanction to rely on accurate calculations? Does the word "discretion" or its equivalent in Arabic which also connotes 'relying on estimates' accept the interpretation of using scientific calculations? It is such questions which an individual like myself cannot answer. It seems to me, however, that a combination of both methods of sighting the moon and calculation may provide the complete answer.

When the moon is sighted in a particular locality, does that sighting apply to all Muslim countries? This is another question, which leads to much controversy. A large number of scholars argue that it is possible for the whole Muslim world to fast and to end its fast on the same days. A large number also believes that every locality should rely on its own sighting. There is sufficient guidance by the Prophet to support each argument. But the matter cannot be resolved, unless it is backed by a resolution from a recognized Islamic council of jurists, and implemented by governments. For the time being, however, each political entity will continue to make its own decisions in this matter. This is not in contravention of the teachings of Islam. It is, however, possible to make an advancement in this connection. We pray Allah to guide the Muslim community to make such an advancement.

(Adil Salahi is the Religious Editor of the Arab News, Jeddah.)

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Focus on Ramadhan

Essential Facts You Must Know about Qur'an

Prof Muhammad Suleman Siddiqi

THE Qur'an is the last of the Revealed Books of Religion. In its original message the Qur'an is of eternal significance and validity.

The word Qur'an is derived from the word *Qarat* which means 'to read' — XCVI 1

The verb *Qara'a* frequently occurs in the Qur'an. In Surah XVII 93 it certainly stands for 'to read' but most frequently means 'to recite' 'to discourse'.

The Qur'an is meant to be recited to be heard with attention and respect and to be responded to.

The Qur'an has a meaning of its own. It cannot be understood with the help of an Arabic dictionary. It should be understood by the following five means:

- † Qur'an from within the Qur'an
- † Qur'an with the help of Hadith
- † Qur'an with the help of the explanation given by the Sahaba (the Tab'een (the Companions of the Noble Prophet and those who followed him))
- † Islamic Jurisprudence
- † Qur'an with the help of the knowledge of Arabic language

The Qur'an should be studied not from the point of view of science or philosophy but with religious fervour. It should be read by means of the Qur'an only.

The Qur'an says: *And in truth We have made the Qur'an easy to remember but is there any that remembereth* LIV 17 and also LIV 22

The following four are the postulates of the Qur'an:

Qirat - To read LXXIII 20

Tadabbur - To ponder (over the meanings) IV 82

Tabligh - To preach to convey Allah's Message to others XIV 52

In the Qur'an there are many assertions of its excellence. *If they say the Qur'an is his own device then bring ten surahs like it of your devising* IX 16 VI 94 XVI 7 LIII 4

According to *Itqan* of Jalaluddin as-Suyuti the Qur'an is distinguished in respect of the text of the Book by 55 special titles such as *Al Kitab al Mubin al Karim al Qalam al Burhan al Nun al Huda al Rahmah al Furqan* etc.

Another word for the revelation

that often occurs in conjunction with the Qur'an is *Kitab* which is found more than 250 times in the Qur'an itself.

The Qur'an is inscribed upon *Lawh Mahfur*: the sacred guarded tablet LXXXV 22

The revelations came to the Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) through the ministrations of Archangel Gabriel II 87

In Surah XXVI 193 it is mentioned that the Qur'an is said to have been revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) by *Ruhul Amin* or Faithful Spirit but in chapter III 5 it is said that it was taught to Muhammad (peace be on him) by *Shadid ul Quwa* or the Mighty in Power.

The call came through the vision of the Archangel Gabriel who said: 'O Muhammad thou art the Messenger of God' and commanded Muhammad (peace be on him) to recite.

The term employed in the Qur'an to describe the revelation process is *Wahy* a noun or *Awha* a verb — XVIII 27

The Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadhan on the

Focus on Ramadhan

Night of Power *Laylat ul Qadr* – XCVII 1 2 3

The first Qur'anic verse revealed to the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) is from Surah Al-Alaq or the Clot – XCVI 1-5 Between the first and second revelations there was a brief interregnum called *Fatihah*

The second revelation received by the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) after a gap of 2 or 3 years is in the Surah Al-Mudath-hir LXXIV 1 2 or Al Muzzammil LXXIII 1 2

The Revelations came to the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) in fragments from time to time A revelation consisted sometimes of a whole Surah short or long and sometimes of only a few verses

The fragmentariness of the Qur'anic revelation may be explained in terms of Prophet's responses to the circumstances and problems that he and his community faced

The first verse of the Qur'an was revealed to the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) in the Cave of Hira

The first revelation came to Prophet Muhammed (peace be on him) at the age of 40 The last revelation came to Prophet Muhammed (peace be on him) during his last pilgrimage i.e., *Hajjatul Wida* (Farewell Pilgrimage) in A H 10/A D 631 (V 3)

After the last revelation the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) lived for 81 days

The first Surah of the Qur'an is Al-Fatihah or the opening also called the *Ummul Qur'an* (The essence or the root of the Qur'an), revealed at Makkah

The second Surah of the

Qur'an, Al-Baqara (The Cow), was revealed at Madina The last Surah of the Qur'an is An-Naas (Mankind) which was revealed at Makkah

The longest chapter of the Qur'an is Surah al-Baqara (The Cow) II It comprises 28 verses The smallest chapter of the Qur'an is Surah al-Kauthar (Abundance) C VIII which consists of only 3 verses

The name of the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) Muhammad, is mentioned 4 times and that of Ahmad once

In the month of Ramadan every year the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) was asked by Archangel Gabriel to recite the whole of it twice It was a *Muzakka* between the two

The Qur'an is the last of the Revealed Books There would be no more Revealed Books after this The Qur'an represents the culmination of all other earlier Revealed Books

The Qur'an comprises 114 Surahs of which 90 are Makkan and 24 are Madinan but according to another version 86 and 28 respectively

The Makkan Surahs form 1/3rd and the Madinan Surahs 2/3rd portions of the Qur'an

The total period of Revelation was 22 years 5 months and 14 days, according to the Hijra calendar

90 Makkan Surahs are brief, poetic, rhythmic, lucid and easy to memorise These Surahs basically deal with the concepts of Oneness, Attributes of Allah, Prophethood, the Life Hereafter Hell and Paradise, stories of the earlier Prophets as also moral lessons

24 Madinan Surahs are lengthy prosaic and full of legislative content These chapters basically deal with the concepts of day-to-day affairs like Marriage, Divorce, Inheritance, Crime and Punishment Prohibition of Wine, Gambling Jihad Zakat, Crimes such as Theft, Usury, Fornication and Adultery etc They, in fact, cover all aspects of life

113 Surahs of the Qur'an begin with the incantation In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful It is mentioned once more in the letter of Prophet Sulaiman addressed to Queen Bilqis in Surah XXXVII 30 thus totalling 114 times

The only Surah of the Qur'an which does not begin with 'In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful' is Al-Tauba IX

The chapter preceding Surah Tauba, i.e. Surah Anfal sets forth rules relating to war The same issues are also discussed in Surah Tauba, which is the reason why this chapter does not begin with 'In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful' It has been so since the times of Noble Prophet (peace be on him)

There are 14 verses in the Qur'an which are called *Ayatul Sajdah* where prostration is held binding They are VII 206 XIII 15 XVI 50 XVII 108 XIX 58, XXII 18, XXV 60, XXVII 25, XXXII 15 XXXVIII 24, XII 38 III 62, IXX XIV 21, XCVI 19

There are 30 Surahs in the Qur'an which begin with mysterious letters like *Alif Lam Mim Kaf Ha Ya Ain Swad* etc whose meaning is known to God only

The division of *Manzil* took place during the times of *Sahaba*

Focus on Ramadhan



Recitation of the glorious Qur'an is a familiar sight in the month of Ramadhan which is also called the month of the Qur'an

or the Companions of the Noble Prophet (peace be on him)

In the Qur'an there are seven Manzils

Chapter 1 4 9 10 16 17-25
26 36 37-49 50 114

The Qur'an has 540 Rukus
6236 or 6666 Ayats

The Qur'an contains two types of Ayats *Muhkamat* or clear cut injunctions where there is no possibility of a second interpretation and *Mutashabihat* or ambiguous injunctions where there is a possibility of more than one interpretation III 7 For example IV 3 and XXIV 35

The Qur'an contains 86430 or 77934 words 358248 or 323621 letters

99 names of Allah are men-

tioned in the Qur'an such as *al Rahman al Rahim al Malik al Quddoos al Mumin Al Aziz* etc They are referred to in the Qur'an as *Asma ul Husna* or the most beautiful names - VII 180 They focus on Divine attributes like Merciful Just Mighty etc

The chief Divine characteristics that emerge from the 99 most beautiful names of Allah are Omnipotent Creator - XIII 16 Bountiful Benefactor - XVI 18 and Stern Judge

Among the oldest testaments the covenants of Adam Noah and Abraham are mentioned 70 times in 25 different chapters of the Qur'an

The following are the Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an

Adam is mentioned 25 times in

the Qur'an, Idris 2 Nooh 43 Hood-7 Ibrahim 67 Ismail 12 Ishaq-17 Saleh-8 Loot-27 Ya'qoob-16 Yusuf-27 Shoaib 11, Moosa-135 Haroon-19 Yunus 4 Dawood-16 Sulaiman-17 Ayub 4 Ilyas 2 Al Yas'a 2 Zakariya-7 Yahya-2 Zulkifl 2 Uzair-1 Isa-33 Ahmad Muhammad-5 (peace be on him)

Among Allah's other creations referred to in the Qur'an are spiritual beings such as Angels and Jinns IV 119 20

The Qur'an also recognizes several classes of other spiritual beings the Jinns and the Angels to serve and worship God and the demons to tempt humans to go astray

The following are the angels mentioned in the Qur'an Gabriel or al Ruh, Mikail Malikul Mawt

Focus on Ramadhan

Malik Hafazah Haroot and Maroot Kiraman Katibeen Kiramin Barara, Mu aqqibat and Mu dabbirat

According to the Qur'an the human beings have a special place within the creation i.e. *Ashraful Maqluqat* (the best among Allah's creation) XCV 4

Compilation of Qur'an

The Qur'an is the only Book in the world which has remained for the past 14 centuries pure without any interpolation or change and would remain so till the Last Day as Allah has guaranteed its purity in the Qur'an - XV 9

The arrangement of the Qur'anic Surahs is Divine (75 16, 17)

The Prophetic compilation of the Qur'an was not a chronological compilation as he indicated the precise place of the revelation in the text

During the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), the Qur'an was written upon hides, white stone tablets, slates, the round shoulder bones of the camel and the wide branches of date palm trees

Sayyidna Umar, who later became the second rightly-guided Caliph, was instrumental in the first compilation of the Qur'an as 700 *Huffaz* (who had memorized the Qur'an) had died in the battle of Yamamah

The Qur'an was compiled by applying a double method, i.e., when there was doubt in a written text, memory came to rescue and when memory failed the written text was resorted to

The first compilation of the Qur'an was undertaken by Sayyidna Abu Bakr and Zaid bin Thab-

it the personal secretary of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was given the charge of this work

The first copy of the Qur'an compiled during the period of Sayyidna Abu Bakr was kept with Hafsa, daughter of Sayyidna Umar

The following persons had learnt the Qur'an by heart and helped at the time of the first compilation of the Qur'an Abdullah bin Masood Salim, Sayyidna Ali Muadh bin Jabal, Ubayy bin Ka'ab and Abdullah bin Umar

Hudhayfah who led the Muslim troops against the Armenians in Azerbaijan, reported to Caliph Uthman the disputations among his Muslim soldiers about the correct reading of the Qur'an

Thereafter, Caliph Uthman recompiled the Qur'an on a single dialect. He is therefore called *Ismi ul Qur'an*

The person responsible for the second compilation of the Qur'an during the time of Caliph Uthman was Hudhayfah bin al-Yaman, again under the supervision of Zaid bin Thabit

The scribes of the Qur'an written during Caliph Uthman's period were Zaid bin Thabit, Abdullah bin Zubair, Said bin al-Aas and Abdur Rahman bin Harith

Seven Copies of the Qur'an prepared during the time of Caliph Uthman were sent to Makkah, Egypt, Yemen, Basra, Kufa, Syria and Bahrain. One was kept at Madina

The indication, whether a particular Surah was Makkan or Madinan, was made before each Surah during the time of the rightly-guided Caliphs

The inventor of diacritical

marks of the Qur'an was Abdul Aswad Du'ali

The Qur'an was recited completely in the *Taraweeh* [the plural of *Tarwih* (rest)], the prayers recited at night in the month of Ramadan. This was done for the first time during the Caliphate of Sayyidna Umar

Two copies of the Qur'an prepared during the time of Caliph Uthman are in the museums of Constantinople (Istanbul) and Tashkent

The original of the Qur'an was in Arabic and in the dialect of the Quraish tribe. The translations of it have been made in all the important languages of the world

Imam Shafi' learnt the whole Qur'an by heart when he was only seven. This itself indicates that it is the *Kalam* of Allah

According to one estimate there are 9 million *Huffaz* in the world today

The Qur'an was first printed in Arabic at Rome in 1530 by Paginus Brixienensis, next in 1649 by Hinkelmann, Hamburg next with Latin translation in 1698 by Maracci Padua

Subjects Tackled in Qur'an

The Qur'an is the only direct and fundamental source of Islamic Jurisprudence, because it is the direct Word of God

The message of the Qur'an is universal

The Qur'an is addressed to all humanity, without any distinction of race, religion or time

The Qur'anic teachings are all comprehensive and are calculated to bring about all-round development of man's faculties

The Qur'an seeks to guide man

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Focus on Ramadhan

in all walks of life spiritual temporal individual and collective

The greatest impact of the Qur'an from the earliest period of Islam has been the world-view it propounds and the guidelines for daily life it provides

The greatest motto of the Qur'an is well-being in this world and the salvation in the Hereafter

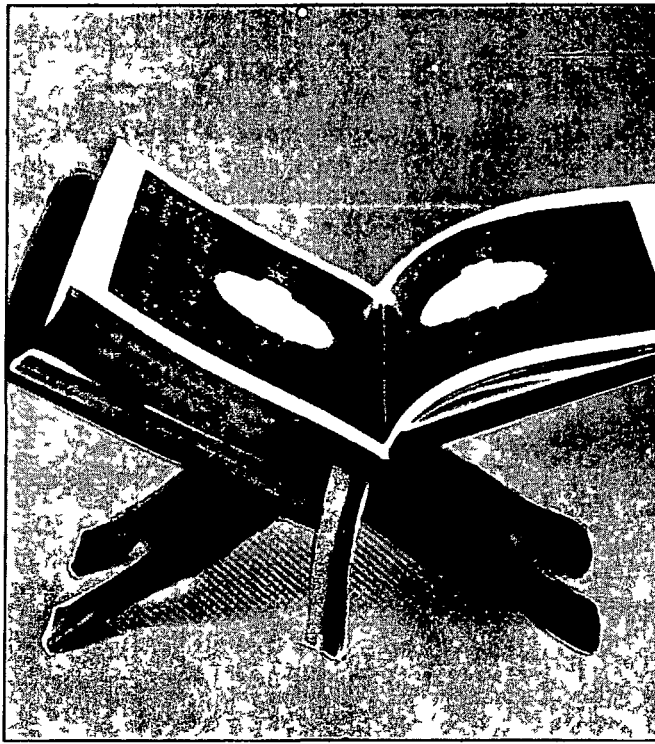
The Qur'an's principal concern is with the Divine relationship with humanity indeed its very purpose is to summon mortals to the recognition of the sovereignty of God over their lives and to invite them to surrender to His Will

The basic themes of the early messages were the Majesty of the One Unique God the futility of idol worship the warning about the Day of Judgement the necessity of faith compassion and morality in human affairs

The Qur'an contains many different kinds of subjects that range from narratives to prescriptions and prohibitions of a quasi-legal nature and exhortations to fear God

The Qur'an insists 700 times upon the performance of Salat Zakat it is not a mere act of piety rather it is the third among the five pillars of Islam It has been mentioned constantly with prayers (Salat) some 37 times in the Qur'an

The Qur'an contains directions for the Head of the State the rich the poor for peace for war for spiritual material and commercial well-being



The contents of the Qur'an in a general sense can be classified as metaphysical and abstract theological ethical mystic ritual and legal

About 700 verses of the Qur'an are mostly concerned with religious duties and rituals like prayers fasting and pilgrimage

About 80 to 100 verses of the Qur'an specifically deal with legal subjects

The Qur'an's legal regulations known as the laws of the Qur'an relate to different categories

¹ The first relates to religious duties of a Muslim with regard to prayer fast pilgrimage Zakat i.e. duties which a believer as slave (Abd) owes to the Lord

Other regulations have more to do with the life of the community or relationships among people,

Rules governing relations between the sexes including

marriage divorce adultery and fornication is well as the norms for modest conduct

Rules regulating the relations between parents and children comprised of their duties towards one another

* Rules relating to criminal acts especially murder theft and retaliation

Rules relating to inheritance

* Rules for the control of commercial relations such as contracts debt usury and fairness in business dealings

¹ Rules relating to slaves and their treatment

* Rules relating to food and drinks including the prohibition of wine

The Qur'an rejects all forms of idolatry disallows any association of other divinities with God and specifically denies all other definitions of God that might compromise unity such as the Christian dogma of Trinity

The central concept around which all Qur'anic teaching revolves is that of *Tawhid* or the Unity of Oneness of Allah CXII 1 2 3 4 5 & II 163

The Qur'an lays emphasis upon God's *Tawhid* His unity and singularity For example the verse God there is no God but He II 28

(Prof M S Siddiqi is the Head department of Islamic Studies University College of Arts and Social Sciences Osmania University Hyderabad Andhra Pradesh India)

Focus on Ramadhan

The Month of Ramadhan in Nigeria

Sharafuddin Kola Oladejo

THE ninth month of Islamic year is Ramadhan. It is in this month that Muslims throughout the world embark on a unique moral and spiritual Islamic duty and thereby get themselves purified before God. It is a month in which it is obligatory for Muslims to abstain from food, drink, intimate sexual intercourse and smoking before the break of the dawn till sunset during the entire 29 or 30 days in the month. The Almighty Allah says:

O you who believe! fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint. (Qur'an 2:183)

Considering the subsequent verse of the same chapter, there is an exemption for about seven categories of people to break the fast for any of the legitimate reasons and compensate for it later. In Nigeria, here several unique activities use to take place during the month. As a result of the rotating pattern of lunar months, Ramadhan may at one time coincide with the longest day of the year and at another time during the dry season when sun shines.

Thus, the fasting of Ramadhan may be very challenging requiring considerable stamina, will-power, which leads to strong



A religious function being organized in Ramadhan

self-discipline, restraint, self-sacrifice, determination, commitment and continuous struggle against all forms of evils. Fasting in Ramadhan involves a number of onerous physical and spiritual obligations as well as mental and moral restrictions. It discourages moral laxity, permissiveness and

mental weakness.

Despite all these and other self-restraints that Ramadhan involves, Nigerian Muslims give the month a cold reception and dance to the tune of its requirements. This is due to the fact that the failure of any Muslim to observe fast during the month is committing an odious sin. On this, a tradition of the Noble Prophet says:

“Anyone who does not with out illness or any other valid excuse, keep fast on a single day during Ramadhan will not succeed in making amends for it even if he were to keep fast daily throughout his life in atonement.”

Another tradition has it that on the day of judgement a very long cloth shall be spread under the seat of *Arsh* (Throne) of Allah for those who keep fasts in the world and they will eat thereon, while others will remain engaged in their statement of account. If anyone makes things easy for Allah's slave during it, Allah will forgive him and free him from Hell. During the month Allah recompenses His servant directly Himself. The recompensation by Allah for good deeds during the month are so numerous.

Preparations for the Month

The account of activities in Ra-

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Focus on Ramadhan

midhan to be given here is peculiar to the southwestern part of Nigeria among the Yoruba tribes. Despite the fact that people are to abstain from eating, drinking and deny themselves the pleasures of legitimate sexual satisfaction solely as a measure of worship and sacrifice his legitimate biological needs and urges exclusively for the sake of God, people give the month a rousing welcome and prepare fully for it.

When the month is approaching and if you come across a social gathering of Muslims either at a mosque or at other places they will be discussing the issue of fasting. When the word fast is mentioned you may hear some people exclaiming in exultation. The essence of this exclamation is not only for the sake of abstinence from the above quoted but also as a result of realizing the huge amount of money to be spent during the month and on the festivities later on.

At the approach of the month business activities increase. Slight increases are noticed on prices of food stuffs and commercial activities generally increase all over the place.

As part of the preparations environmental sanitation does take place. As mosques are to host a lot of people for *salah* than usual during the month the inside of the mosques and the premises are thoroughly cleaned. The Noble Prophet has been quoted as saying: "The month consists of twenty-nine days but do not fast till you see it (new moon) and if the weather is cloudy wait till thirty days of the previous month (Shaban) have passed. One of the problems that normally confront people at the commencement of Ramadhan in Nigeria is the sighting of the moon. Some

times the people would have gone to bed unprepared for *Sahoor* and would suddenly hear unfamiliar commotion through public address systems and people moving around announcing the latest message either from the Sultan or the chief Imam of the town.

Tuning to the radio and television similar message are heard declaring the arrival of Ramadhan and hence commencement of the fast. This normally finds many people without food at home and yet they observe Ramadhan as eating and drinking during days throughout the month is prohibited. But at times when the human calculation is in accordance with the appearance of the moon after *Maghrib* service you find the mosques reverberating with the words of admonition concerning the month and thanks and praises to Allah for granting us another opportunity to see a new year. Songs welcoming the month as month of mercy, blessing and forgiveness are heard.

On the day Ramadhan starts people troop out to the mosques in hundreds dressed in a very neat attire. On such a night mosques receive people who had earlier been absent therefrom. At the mosque premises or in front of some houses people gather for *Isha* and *tarawih* service also. On this day after *salat* a lot of prayers are said. People give money to the Imam and learned men in the mosque as gift in showing appreciation to Almighty Allah for His mercy in guiding them and in beseeching Allah to guide them through the month so that they may not transgress.

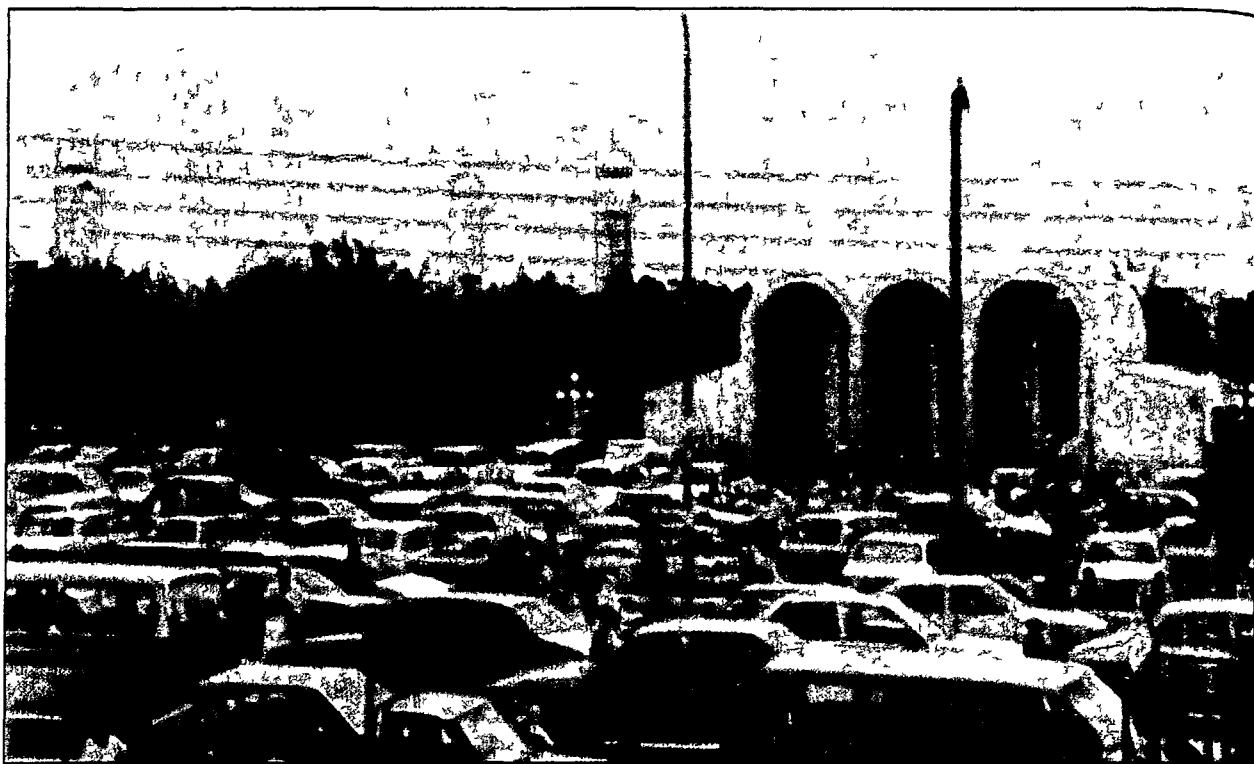
Immediately after prayers people troop out in hundreds to return to their beds in preparation for *Sahoor* meal. Anyone who visits Nigeria at this time would will

think that Nigeria is a purely Islamic state. The young ones after their services normally retire to bed late as they parade and drum around the streets singing songs welcoming Ramadhan. At each of the houses such young ones visit those who evince interest in their shows and also give them money.

According to one of the Prophet's traditions he is quoted as saying: "There is a blessing in taking a meal a little before dawn (*Sahoor*). Never fail to do so. If nothing else is available then drink even a draught of water for Allah bestows His mercy on those who eat and drink at that time and angels pray for them." In the spirit of this saying a call is made through the public address system at mosques and young ones go from street to street calling on people to wake up for *Sahoor*. Radio and television are also busy with Islamic programmes sponsored by well-to-do Muslims in the society. Some people sit late till the call for Fajr prayers is made listening or watching the religious programmes aired or telecast by radio and TV.

It is also reported that the Prophet used to break his fast before the *Maghrib* prayers with fresh dates but if there were no fresh dates available he had a few dry dates and if there were no dry dates he took a few sips of water. Here in Nigeria as soon as the time of *iftar* draws near people would gather at mosques waiting to hear Adhan call for *salah* and would then break their fast with different kinds of fruits they had brought with them. Immediately after *salah* people return home to take a light meal. In the western part of Nigeria people normally take pistachio (*Ajin*) at *iftar* and at *Sahoor* mashed yam. Among other unique activities that normally take place during Ramadhan are

Focus on Ramadhan



Mosques overflowing with worshippers in the blessed month of Ramadhan in Nigeria

Tafsir of Qur'an The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious for thy Lord knows the best those who have strayed from His path and who receive guidance of righteous (Q 16 125)

During Ramadhan in Nigeria all nooks and crannies are filled with gathering of people listening to the scholars of the Qur'an giving explicit discourses on the Qur'an. In the central mosques lectures on the exegesis of the Qur'an are also organized.

Some schedule their lectures in the morning, others in the evening and some in the night. Those who cannot afford to attend these lectures listen to them on radio and

television. In short during Ramadhan people are found engaged in Zikr Allah. Prominent among the scholars who appear on Radio and Television include Alhaji Shaikh Adam Abdullah proprietor of Arabic and Islamic Training Institute Agege, Lagos; Shaikh Kamal al-Din of Arabic and Islamic Institute Ilorin; Shaikh Mikhail Folorunsho of the Department of Foreign Languages Osun State College of Education Ilesa, Nigeria and a host of others. Inspiring and instructive Islamic songs are also heard on the radio and TV during the month. It is also common to see Muslims holding in their hands the part of the Qur'an wherever you see them during the month. The learned ones make it a point of duty to read at least a chapter of the Qur'an per day.

It is generally observed that during the month Dawah activities

increase tremendously. Several supererogatory prayers are said in order to seek God's favour and mercy. Ceremonies such as Nikah and passing out ceremonies which are normally observed at weekends are suspended. The organisations in towns normally organise lectures, symposia and competitions such as essay writing, Qur'an recitation and quiz among secondary schools and Arabic and Islamic training institutes during the month. On such occasions students and schools that perform well are given prizes.

The Grand Night (Lailat al Qadr) With regard to the importance attached to this Grand Night it is popularly and traditionally believed by Muslims that one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadhan is undoubtedly auspicious for the fulfilment and realization of human needs and supplications. The Al

Focus on Ramadhan

mighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an

We have indeed revealed this message in the Night of Power. And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein comes down the angels and the Spirit by God's permission on every errand of Peace! This until the rise of morn! (Q 97:1-5)

In the above quoted verses the Grand Night is spoken of thrice in the Qur'an 44:25 it is referred to as a Blessed Night (*Lailah Muबारakah*). The Noble Prophet has been quoted as saying 'Seek Lailat al Qadr on an odd numbered night among the last ten in Ramadhan'. Acting on this Hadith and others mosque congregations, societies and organisations celebrate the night with a lot of fervour and devotion. When the time comes they normally fix one odd night.

Admonitions regarding the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and the significance of the night as expressed in the above hadith are given. Muslims in Nigeria celebrate night with great joy and spirit. Gifts of cash and kind are given to mosques and the learned men. Generally people intensify their devotions during the period. Virtuous deeds also increase and people are seen on their prayer mats with their prayer beads glorifying Allah.

Ihtakaf or Seclusion Ihtakaf literally means to retire to a place. Technically it is to retire to mosque from a little before sunset on the 27th of Ramadhan upto the sunset of 29th or 30th i.e. till the appearance of the Eid moon. This is called *Ihtakaf*. The last ten days of Ramadhan are generally crowded

with several programmes that are very interesting in bidding farewell to the month. As a result studies reveal very few people observe Ihtakaf. This is due to programmes that are scheduled for the period. Besides family heads there are several obligations for people to meet. However students at tertiary institutions as well as some other people also observe it.

Zakat

Since it is during Ramadhan that people normally observe this pillar of Islam there is need to discuss it here. Zakat requires that a Muslim who is in possession of certain amount of wealth or more is required by his religion to spend one fortieth of it at the end of every twelve months on the poor, the needy and the wayfarer as prescribed by God and the Prophet. When Ramadhan draws to an end in Nigeria we see in the mosques and at Qur'an Tafseel centres envelopes containing money given to the learned men especially the Imam and others as Zakat.

It is disheartening to see that uptill now in Nigeria the mode of zakat's distribution has not achieved the required effectiveness as the beneficiaries in most cases are the notable ones among the learned men in the societies. The attempt here is not to discredit the receiver as most of them have no other source of income. Both the giver and the receiver however should fear God and follow the Qur'anic injunction towards Zakat's distribution.

In the recent past however some organisations have emerged catering to this. Notable among these is Abiola Zakat Welfare Fund which is organised by Chief M.K.O. Abiola the acclaimed winner of June 12/1993 presidential

election. This Fund is well organised and is controlled by men who are dynamic and magnanimous in their disposition. At Osogbo the Osun State Capital there is Muslim Charitable Foundation (M.C.F.) which was set up to alleviate human suffering. This is organised and controlled by Brother Abdul Rauf Adisa the National Coordinator of New Era National Islamic Propagation Centre representing Siddiqi Trust of Pakistan in Nigeria.

My plea to Nigerian Muslims and other fellow Muslims all over the world is to see zakat as a purifier. Allah says in the glorious Qur'an

Of their wealth take alms so that thou mightest purify and sanctify them (Qur'an 9:103)

Muslims who qualify to pay the zakat should therefore cleanse their wealth yearly by taking out accurately an amount prescribed by the Qur'anic injunction and distribute it amongst the needy Muslims as per the Qur'anic stipulations bearing in mind the grievous penalty awaiting the evildoers as the Qur'an lays down in 9:34-35.

General Observations

Ramadhan is the month of discipline and control on all the elements of which man is composed of. It is observed that during Ramadhan people who fast apart from their abstinence from eating and drinking refrain from falsehood, backbiting, injustice, hatred and other vices. Spirit of self-sacrifice and self-discipline prevails. Other common vices such as consumption of liquor and sexual violations are shunned during Ramadhan by Muslims. All beer parlours and eating houses are deserted in the month as Allah

Focus on Ramadhan



Dawah work on a large scale is a special feature of Ramadhan seen in Nigeria

promises immeasurable rewards or Muslims who observe the fast is it should be

In short, the month trains people for good deeds and restrain them from evil This is in accordance with the saying of the Noble Prophet (peace be on him) When you fast, let your ear, your eye your tongue and your hand and every limb fast He is also quoted as saying many a man who fasts gets nothing from his/her fasting but hunger and thirst

That is not all a high spirit of brotherhood and fraternity is cherished and promoted by all The abstinence from eating, drinking and other things promotes equal-

ity between the rich and the poor and hence humanitarian services increase Long term quarrels are resolved which fosters closeness of Eid and amity This is in accordance with Allah's saying

The believers are naught else than brothers Therefore make peace between your brethren and observe your duty to Allah that haply ye may obtain mercy (Qur an 49 10)

Eid Day

As the month draws to and end each family would have made preparations for the day of Eid as far as food and clothes are concerned On Eid day people wear

new and neat attires and troop in thousands to Eid saying Takbeer Tashreeq and giving thanks and praises to Almighty Allah After Eid people return home in joyous mood repeating Takbeer Tashreeq and thanks and praises of Allah Much as the accounts given above would have impressed my readers it is however disheartening to see some Muslims who have abstained from forbidden drinks such as consumption of beer returning to it after Eid

It is equally disheartening to see some Muslims failing to break their fast when the sighting of moon is announced in some parts of the country The reason for this could be traced to the recent political situation in the country which has heightened the North and South dichotomy My advice to Nigerian Muslims and Muslims all over the world is to shun tribalism and see each other as brothers and sisters

The above account is not enough to provide my reader a full account of Ramadhan in Nigeria visit to it during the month will certainly portray the exact picture of the preparations made for Ramadhan In conclusion Allah the Almighty says

To those who strive in Our (cause)

We will certainly guide them to our path

For verily God is with those who do right (Q 29 69)18

Considering this Quranic verse Muslim should see fasting in Ramadhan as one aspects of that perpetual and conscientious struggle (Jihad) and hence, we should ever remember the lesson the month taught us so that here and in the Hereafter Allah might bestow on us His infinite mercy

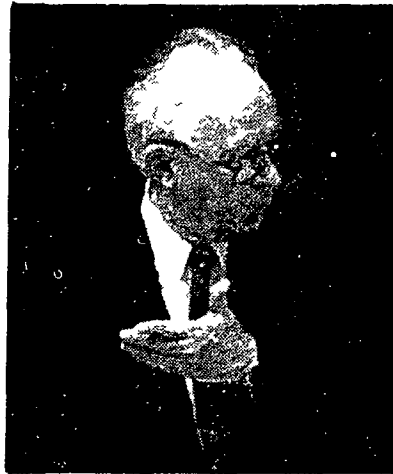
Current Affairs

Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and After

Amer Obeid

MWL Office Amman

THE personal influence of a political leader on his nation's policies cannot be denied or easily ignored. Even in the countries categorized as democratic where laws are enacted after being endorsed by the legislature, the persuasion of the leader can lead him a president, prime minister or a house speaker does in one way or another affect the process of decision making. A charismatic figure through his personal skills can win the populace in favour of his policy – a feat which cannot be accomplished by a less qualified man. The Israeli strategy although it is an entrenched dogma is not however an exception.



Yitzhak Rabin

He in fact bridged a large gap in the psychological barrier through which the parties of the Madrid conference could turn to each other.

The Oslo parlays conducted in strict secrecy which led to the Palestinian self-rule formula could be attributed to the personal persuasion of a few Palestinian, Norwegian and Israeli intellectuals and academicians. They were in fact captivated by the idea that a financially propped comprehensive peace would render the Middle East into a Paradise like zone. Nobody can disregard the subtle diplomacy of Yossi Beilin of the Israeli Foreign Ministry in preventing the staggering much of negotiations from outright collapse.

The most recent instance in this context is the threat of veto by

the American President Bill Clinton which deterred at least for the time being the Senate endorsed move for relocation of the American diplomatic mission from Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem. A move if initiated would have invalidated the entire efforts now being exerted to bring about an end to the Arab Israeli conflict.

The United Nations ever since its inception in 1945 has remained in active forum to produce scores of anti Palestinian resolutions. The individual endeavours had been crucial in producing the partition resolution of 1947 to divide Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish. Several Latin American delegates tearfully voted in its favour. In that respect the assassination of UN Swedish envoy Count Bernadotte by the Zionist gangs for his impartial and objective report on the situation of Palestine in 1948 and his replacement by an American aide had an adverse impact on the issue at that stage.

It is also interesting to state several other examples on the role of the individuals in bringing about great changes in history. Among these are Alexander the Great of Macedonia, the Egyptian Cleopatra VII, the Roman Emperor Titus Napoleon Bonaparte of France, Richard the Lionheart, the Italian Fascist Mussolini and the German dictator Adolf Hitler.

A leader other than the Late Menachem Begin would not have been able to steer the domestic and international affairs in a way to secure to Israel the ground breaking Camp-David accords which caused a major breach in the Arab front as the most populous Arab country, Egypt, broke ranks with its sister Arab states.

Similarly, no Jewish figure other than Shimon Peres, the then Israeli Foreign Minister, could have used his position in the Socialist International to convert a large number of universal figures, including intellectuals, politicians and party leaders from among the Arabs to share with him the notion of coexistence in one community regardless of other con-

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Who can however deny the influential role of Peter the Hermit of France who with his anti-Muslim fiery demagoguery stirred the European mobs to force their way to the walls of Jerusalem in the first Crusade expedition in 1096

Repercussions

After this long yet relevant prologue, one may infer that the killing of Yitzhak Rabin by a Jew, the first incident of its kind since the conspiratorial creation of the Jewish state on usurped Palestinian territories, in 1948, could lead to unfavourable repercussions for the present political situation and also provide clues to more serious and far-reaching implications on the nature and shape of the future Arab Israeli conflict

A change in the psyche of the present Prime Minister, Shimon Peres cannot entirely be ruled out. Rabin's assassination may adversely affect Peres's spirits and accordingly, influence his overall policy, especially the part which concerns the Palestinian demands. Rabin's presence has been a key source of the moral support to Peres allowing him to operate in a freer, safer and healthier atmosphere. Now he has to think twice before taking a significant step especially as he has been left alone in his Labour Party.

Anyone in his place will have to take into account two major issues while proceeding. The increasing and violent opposition to the Palestinian self rule agreements, which was the main factor in Rabin's killing and the wilful rivalry of its arch foe the Likud Bloc which proved according to the recent poll surveys that it would be a strong contender in the forthcoming general elections. The Likud's chances are also ex-



World leaders at the funeral of the slain Israeli Premier

pected to be strengthened because of the "marriage of convenience" between it and the right-wing Republicans of the United States. Keen to get the decisive votes of the American Jews the Republicans have started to openly criticise the attitudes and style of dealing of the ruling Democrats with the Arab-Israeli crisis.

Their opposition has, however, come out openly when Robert Dole, leader of the Republican majority in the US Senate, led a campaign to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied Jerusalem. The move was approved wholeheartedly by both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Jews of America are now tilting towards Likud and, of course, would support the Republicans, especially as they are angered by the Israeli Labour Par-

ty's policy and the harsh reaction of Rabin to their criticism.

It is clear that the Middle East peace process is still receiving the support of the American official quarters as it was strongly expressed in Bill Clinton's emotional eulogy at the funeral of Rabin and in the later assurances of the American Secretary of State, and other world leaders. But the application on the ground requires further commitment from the Israelis themselves, especially in regard to the sensitive and unresolved issues, namely Hebron, Jerusalem Golan Heights and South Lebanon.

Hebron, a very explosive issue in the West Bank formula, should have not been listed as a separate issue as it is an integral part of the West Bank. But the Israelis, recanting previous pledges, included

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it in Oslo Declaration of Principles took out Hebron is in issue needing especial arrangements under the pretext of existence of 400 Jewish settlers living in the down town

Jerusalem whose final status is to be settled next year or by early 1997 will remain a potential factor in sabotaging the entire march of peace in the Middle East. This is simply because of the vowed stand of the Israeli leaders including Rabin and the present Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Peres had bluntly said while attending the economic summit (MENA) in Amman. Jerusalem is politically closed, no division, no withdrawal, it is the unified capital of Israel.

Golan Heights is considered by the Israelis as a strategically located area which Tel Aviv cannot relinquish for the security of Israel. South Lebanon has the Litani and Wazani Rivers, the badly needed resources of water in the region, especially for the Jewish state.

Future Conflict

Previous similar instances substantiate a notion in the Jewish strategy that the Jewish blood could be spilt if this sacrificial offering served the general cause. This tactics may not be adopted generally, but there are still Jewish fanatic groups which will not flinch to follow it. It is however too early to embark on a speculative assessment to link it to Rabin's assassination. It remains just an idea or a conjecture.

The more serious aspect in the killing of Rabin is the identity of the person who carried out the killing, Yigal Amir, as he is called, is only 25 years old, a university student of law and, as the ongoing

investigations have revealed, he might have acted according to a plan of a Jewish extremist group. Amir is from the Jewish generation which was born in the period following the 1967 occupation. Rabin's assassination proves that the Jewish educational curriculum which is drawn up by several Rabbinical and official quarters has been effective to persuade a young man like Yigal Amir to carry out a suicide attack even against a Jew.

The jubilation displayed by many an Israeli and other Jews in the world over Rabin's killing showed the enormity of this dangerous trend in the Jewish body politic. The Jewish bigotry and how these sentiments have been sharpened by the influence of the educational programmes and pedagogy was also criticised by the envoy of the Vatican to Israel. Voicing his regret over the aggression recently committed against a Church in the city of Jaffa, he openly attributed such an action to the sentiments of intolerance harboured by Jews towards anything and anyone who is non-Jewish. This aggressiveness is closely linked to the nature of the education and values prevailing in the Jewish society.

Others go further to link these violent outbursts to an old doctrine preached by Joshua, who displayed unprecedented bigotry and intolerance when he, on conquering Palestine in about the fifteenth century B.C., let his warriors devastate the land and annihilate its inmates from among the Canaanites. The present Jewish generations, especially of Israeli entity, are being enjoined to strictly abide by teachings of the Promised Words and to fight for the return of the Promised Land.

They are instructed among other things that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ must take place in a specific piece of land which is in the Promised Land. The establishment of the Jewish state stretching from the Nile to Euphrates is therefore a sacred duty. The enunciation of Christ's re-appearance has to come out from under the ceiling of the Temple. Jerusalem must therefore be liberated and the Temple rebuilt. The Israelis will then regain their ancient glories and will rule the entire world by virtue of their being the Chosen People.

A Talmudic writing says: When Lord (God) roars from above Zion, and His voice raises from Jerusalem, the city then becomes sacred as it contains none other than the Jews. On that day its mountains start dribbling wine, its hills flowing with milk, and the springs are protuberant.

With such thoughts and ideas prevailing, one doubts whether the current peace efforts will succeed in converting the die-hard ultra-right Jewish fanatics to a rational and balanced approach. The future conflict is accordingly expected to be fiercer and bloodier. In the past, Arabs have waged their wars with Jews with the conviction that the Jewish state was set up on the lands of others with the help of an unholy alliance with imperialists.

Now the ideas are expected to be different with the Jewish young generations as they have been brainwashed to believe that they were waging a holy war for the restoration of the national homeland prior to Christ's Resurrection! The agreements which have been reached with the Arab parties will be taken as evidences supporting their unfounded claims!

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War in Chechnya

Will Yeltsin's Election Ploy Silence Guns?

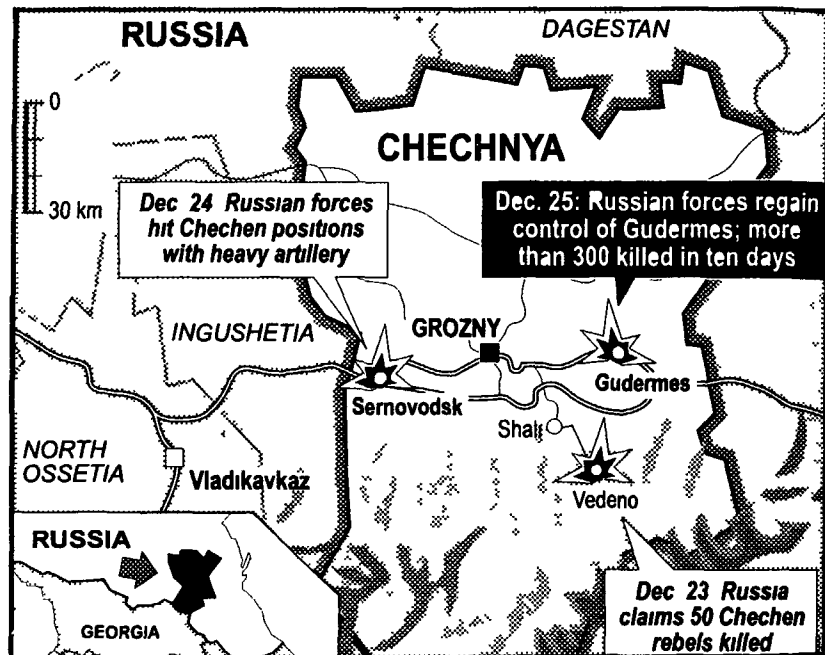
Mrs S A J Mozammel

DESPITE a truce agreed to after the Budennovsk tragedy in July 1995 sporadic clashes continue throughout Chechnya. Both sides blame each other for ignoring obligations under the military deal and provoking the renewal of fighting.

Russia sent 40 000 troops to the southern region, on 11 December 1994, to crush the independence drive launched by Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev in 1991. Thousands of people have been killed, many more fled their homes and many more had their homes destroyed in the savage fighting. Much of Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, was reduced to rubble after Moscow sent troops. It subsided only in June 1995, when peace talks were held after the hostage-taking by Chechen leader Shamil Basayev in Budennovsk in July last.

Though the difficult peace process began in Chechnya as a result of the Budennovsk tragedy, it had run into deadlock after the suspension of talks on implementing a demilitarization accord reached on 1 July 1995. The agreement was designed to end bitter fighting in Chechnya since Russian troops marched into the Caucasus republic in December 1994. Since that time, between 30 000 and 50 000 people, according to independent estimates, have died in Chechnya, mostly civilians.

The situation in Chechnya has



deteriorated since the virtual collapse of the July 30 military pact to end the conflict. According to *The European*, 'The accord has come under severe strain recently, with heavy Russian air and artillery attacks and a Chechen ambush that killed 19 Russian soldiers threatening to trigger full-scale fighting' (*The European* London 2-8 November 1995 page 7). Chechen suspension was in response to constant air strikes, artillery attacks on civilians and the permanent provocation by Russian troops which grossly violate commitments' according to a statement by the Chechen defence committee.

So the sporadic clashes which

continue incessantly disrupt this fragile cease-fire and hamper peace talks. Tensions were rising high. In the first week of October, a bomb blast in Grozny wounded General Anatoly Romanov, the former commander of the Russian forces in Chechnya and, in the second week of the same month, Russian warplanes bombed Roshny-Clu southwest of Grozny, targeting Chechen leader Dudayev and killed 28 and injured about 60. The warring sides pulled out of peace negotiations after the bomb attack on Romanov.

Under this situation everyone was advising not to hold elections in Chechnya. According to the *London Times*, "Moscow pol

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Chechen fighters set up their weapons as they get ready to fight with Russian troops. No peace till Russian troops leave Chechnya

itioners have condemned the idea of holding elections in the republic after rebel Chechens supporting the former President Dzhokhar Dudayev have threatened to disrupt the polls by violence if necessary. They say no elections can be held while Russian forces are still inside Chechnya. (*The Times* London 23 November 1995 page 14) Mr Yuri Burtin from Moscow enquired

What kind of Chechen elections can take place amid the rumble of tanks when half the electorate is not present and refugees are scattered throughout the republic?

Why does Mr Yeltsin urgently want to hold the elections in Chechnya? (*The Guardian* 6 December 1995 page 14)

When it is crystal clear that many of those Chechens who would be available would not go to polls to vote and when the Chechen fighters vowed to torpedo the elections, is there any justification to make a farce of balloting? But the Kremlin has her own logic. She was determined to hold an election in Chechnya on

14-17 December 1995 to lend legitimacy to Russia's puppet administration in the breakaway republic. Moscow needs the election which only requires a 25 per cent turnout to be valid to give the Russia installed leaders a fig leaf of legitimacy. Here too Yeltsin played the old trick of creating divisions among Chechens by playing the Chechen card.

Ruslan Khasbulatov, an ethnic Chechen who chaired the former Russian parliament which confronted Yeltsin in October 1993, enjoys significant support in Chechnya as a politician and is no friend of the Kremlin. Moscow sees him as a potentially useful counterweight to Dzhokhar Dudayev, who unilaterally declared Chechnya independent in 1991.

But Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, who was elected Chechnya's President in 1991, opposed the election until Russian troops withdrew. The Chechen fighters vowed to torpedo plans to stage elections in the war-torn republic

saying none should be held until Russian troops have withdrawn. Nearly 90 per cent of Chechen villages had formed special committees to block the balloting. The villagers demonstrated in Grozny and Shali opposing the election plans. How can we vote when our sons are dead and not yet buried or vanished into concentration camps? I will not go out to vote for those dogs, said Sirdat Bakayeva, 55, one of the first to gather at a square amid the ruins of Central Grozny.

Even Ruslan Khasbulatov considered the vote untimely and blamed Zavgayev for pressing to hold it. He pulled out saying the vote would rekindle the war.

Holding the elections without creating conditions for reconciliation of warring sides may far from ending the war produce a new round of bloodshed. Khasbulatov told. Transition from war to peace is the most difficult issue and it should be settled not at the polling stations but at the negotiating table, he added.

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Although politicians and public opinion were against holding elections in Chechnya and although the clashes continue the Moscow-appointed Chechen government had set elections for a new leader of the republic, on 14 December 1995

The suspicion proved true and violence erupted throughout Chechnya. The attack at a Russian reconnaissance unit came on the first day of voting in local and national elections in Chechnya which the Kremlin insisted on holding and was boycotted by the Chechens. About 600 Chechen fighters entered Gudermes 30 km east of Grozny on 14 December 1995 as voting began in the territory for Russia's parliamentary elections for a new local leadership. They had 'taken almost all the town'. They seized parts if not all of the town of Urus-Martan, captured police and military headquarters and attacked Russian posts in Grozny. The fighting was the heaviest in the area since a ceasefire was signed between Russians and insurgents last July. Many of the separatists had pledged to disrupt the voting.

The fighting around Gudermes has been some of the worst since the Kremlin sent troops to Chechnya a year ago to crush the region's independence bid. The Chechen fighters briefly held the railway station and military headquarters despite heavy Russian tank and artillery attacks. Chechen military commander, Aslan Maskhadov, said the operation to seize Gudermes had been aimed at discrediting the Russian-organized



Boris Yeltsin No end to war in Chechnya in sight

Chechen leadership elections which returned Moscow-installed prime minister Doku Zavgayev to power.

Doku Zavgayev was declared the winner in the election with 95 per cent of the vote. But journalists in the breakaway region questioned official turnout figures and the way ballot was stage managed.

It is rightly observed "Any regime installed by Moscow would not be accepted by the Chechen fighters, the majority of whom are solidly behind Dudayev." (*Central Asia Brief* Vol 11 No 4 April 1995 page 3). The more the days will pass and the more the Russian cruelty inflicted on the Chechens intensifies, the more they will become stronger in their faith and determination to uphold their independence. On the other hand, with the passage of time, the Russian conscript soldiers will be gradually losing their energy to

confront the fierce spirit of Chechen fighters. One of the young Russian conscript soldiers said: "This is a stupid war. It is a second Afghanistan. We can't win it. We can't even walk a few metres without worrying about whether or not someone is going to try and take a shot at us." (*The Guardian* London, 11 December 1995 page 8).

A Russian political analyst, Emil Pain, maintains that whatever the outcome of the war, Russia cannot claim victory as the war is going to create mistrust of Russia in relation to the ethnic minorities. (*Central Asia Brief* April 1995).

There is no end to the war in sight unless Russian troops are completely withdrawn. The Chechen war had an impact on the socio-political situation in Russia. It is also affecting its economy and foreign relations with the Muslim countries. Members of Dudayev's delegation are decisive: "We agree to stage new elections provided the current president of the Republic of Chechnya, Ickeria Dzhokhar Dudayev, can take part in them," said Dudayev's representative Akhmed Zakayev. (*Central Asia Brief* Vol 11 No 7 July 1995). On the other hand, Dudayev himself told journalists that the Chechen fighters won't budge from their demand that Russian troops leave unconditionally. Only after full withdrawal, can the Russians and Chechens work out differences that have stymied peace efforts since 1995 summer. "All the differences with Moscow can be settled in 30 minutes," Dudayev said.



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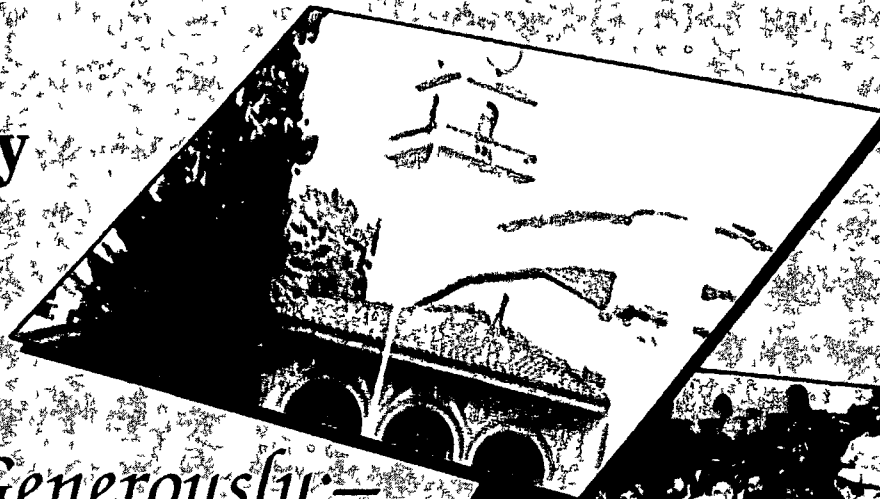
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